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THE Pamphlet Mission

FOR

FREEDOM, FELLOWSHIP AND CHARACTER

IN

RELIGION.

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The PAMPHLET MISSION has been established for the purpose of publishing a fortnightly series of Liberal Religious pamphlets on the Unity, the Evolution, the Doctrines, the Bibles, and the Leaders of Religion; on the Relations of Religion to Science, to Devotion and Conduct, and on kindred topics, written by men whose word combines Liberal thought with religious feeling. Each pamphlet will contain an Essay or Sermon, (original or reprint,) together with from six to ten pages of "Notes and News," made up of short editorials, gleanings from the freshest religious thought, and news-items about Liberal work, Liberal books, etc. It is hoped that the publication will meet the want not only of persons already connected with Liberal organizations, but also, especially, of *isolated Liberals*—the fives and tens and twenties in small towns—men and women thirsty for such words as these pamphlets will carry. Besides their use in the home, they can do good service among friends and neighbors, as well as furnish regular material for Sunday meetings and discussions in places hardly to be reached by Liberal preachers.

The Central Committee and Editors-in-charge, without becoming responsible for the ideas contained in detail, trust that each number of the publication will make good the promise of its title; *i. e.*, that each will stand for real FREEDOM of mind, for real FELLOWSHIP between differing minds, and as most important of all, for CHARACTER as the *test* and *essence* of *religion.*

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Modern Doubt and Dogmatism.

BY REV. H. W. THOMAS.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." —James i, 27.

There seems to be a difficulty, common to most minds, in at first making appear as real to the mental consciousness the great facts that arise in the study of any history or science. It is one thing to go over the words that express these facts, but another and quite a different thing to realize their full meaning. It is easy enough for any child to say that the earth is of such a size, and turns on its axis; that it is so many miles distant from the sun, and forever journeys around that great centre. But to weigh these words, to get a full realization of their great meaning, is quite another thing, and usually comes to the mind later and with a sense of surprise as if it were something new. And the same thing is true in the study of history. It is easy to run over names and dates and battle scenes; but to get the picture in the mind so as to feel the impression of fact is more difficult. How few, in first reading the history of Egypt, or Babylon, or Rome, realize in any full sense the mighty scenes that are passing before the mind. We read of nations, of armies and battles, of cities and temples as light things, hardly thinking even that this earth has been the scene, and our own race the actors, in these vast events. This same difficulty of realization is not only historic—or in things relating to the past—it is prophetic also. The past fades away from us, and the future is but vaguely perceived. We seem often to dwell in a dream-land, where even the pres-

ent passes as a kind of revery. Bread and butter are about the only things we always see and never forget.

This same want of a full mental realization is still more apparent when we first come into the field of bible truth. This fact may arise, not only from the general conditions of mind that make the difficulty common in everything else, but may find special causes in the fact that we all received our first religious impressions—the impressions that have shaped all our after thinking—in our childhood; and we then associated bible truths with the marvelous; and somehow we have been reading them in this light ever since. How few there are who bring even the same historic realization to bible scenes that they do to other matters of history. Do we read of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, or of the destruction of Sodom, or of the demon-possessed swine running into the water, with the same critical appreciation of the wonderful facts involved that we would should we find such statements in Rollin or Josephus or Macaulay?

I think it is more than the growth of a personal consciousness of a more open vision, or the seeing of truth in myself—and for which I daily pray, and daily bless God—that I discern; I think there is an uplifting of reason on the part of many that is almost peculiar to our times. And its effects are becoming everywhere apparent. The sense of historic realization has led to a careful going over of many of the old histories, and a culling and pruning of their statements. The same critical understanding has taken hold of the bible, and placed its marvelous statements under the light of rigid interpretation. Bishop Colenso is a special instance of this kind of mental development and critical work. He never seems to have looked at the facts of biblical history as he would at the facts of profane history—never to have even fully realized what he was reading, till a poor African native, who was assisting him in a translation of some bible narrative, looked up and innocently said "You don't believe that, do you?" And the same direct facing of facts has come out in our time in ref-

erence to the miracles of the bible. Mr. Tyndall has not denied that the sun and moon did stand still at the prayer of Joshua; he has only shown what a wonderful thing it was—how much in the world of physical laws and forces it meant when such a thing was affirmed, or if it ever really occurred. And so of the miracles and marvelous statements of the New Testament, and the life of Christ. The acute historic realization of our times has taken all these scenes out of that halo and that upper world enchantment of spirit, in which the devout of all ages have been reading them, and has brought them down into the cold world of fact, and applied the same rules of criticism to them that it would to any other history, and bids us look these facts square in the face and see just how much they mean. The critical sense reads the account of turning water into wine, or of healing the sick, or of raising the dead, or of abscissions or demoniacal possessions, not as children read the "Arabian Nights," but as a banker reads the quotations of gold or exchange, to see just what is stated and what the statement means. And in this light we are brought face to face with historic statements and asked, "Are these things so, or not so?"

This same open vision, or looking things square in the face and making them give up their real meaning—that is, tell what they are, and whether they belong to fact or fiction, or are to be understood by the judgment or the imagination—this same critical sense has taken hold of the dogmas that have come down to us claiming to be the truths of religion, and asks squarely and pointedly, what do they mean, and are they true? What do you mean, we are asked, when you say that the bible is inspired? What do you mean when you say that it is infallible? What do you mean by total depravity, by atonement, by regeneration? What do you mean by the resurrection and the judgment? What do you mean by eternal punishment? Is there a literal hell of fire and brimstone? Are those who die in their sins to be punished eternally? Is there no possible hope for their reformation, or that the love

of God may somehow reach them in the long, long ages of eternity? And not a few to whom these questions are asked, are compelled to say that so far as a mental perception of their immense magnitude is concerned, they had really never come to look at them, or to weigh their meaning before. And thus, it seems to me, are we coming into almost a new age—an age of realization. And this new age is full of wonderful mental activity, and power, and courage. It is full of questionings on all subjects, and especially does it seem intent upon knowing the real truth, and the whole truth about religion. And there is no history or sacred book so old as to escape the witness stand. There is no dogma, however sheltered by the decrees of popes or the decisions of councils, that must not answer at the call of this modern court of truth. And there is no power that can stay this spirit of inquiry. Once the civil power could interfere; now that very power guarantees the right of private opinion. Once the church could deter by a sense of reverence, or sacredness, or by the fear of persecution, or of some future punishment for opinions, however honestly held. But that day is past. I do not think that our age has lost its reverence for things sacred, nor its reverence for truth; but it wants to be very certain that what is called sacred is sacred, and what is called truth is truth, before it sets up an altar of worship.

This state of the public mind is not regarded alike by all religionists even, nor by all doubters. There are some in the churches and in the ministry who affect to ignore it altogether, and to go on just as if no questions were asked. Others, as the Romanists, attempt to repress inquiry. Still others content themselves with supposing that what has so long been held to be true must be true, and unite to call all doubters ignorant or wilfully wicked. Others fear for the result; fear that if there is the least giving way in any one point that it will be like a break in a dam, and that the rising waters will sweep everything before them. Among the skeptics there are those who foresee the speedy downfall of all religion; others think that

although they have gone far enough to satisfy themselves that religion is a delusion, yet it is a necessary delusion, and they will say nothing about it, but let the clergy go on and practice their ignorant but innocent, and upon the whole rather useful, deceptions. Such men as Dr. Hammond and Draper regard the whole scene as in the simple order of the world's growth. Its childhood age needed, and needing it had, its childhood stories and fables, and beliefs in the supernatural and in spirits, and all such things; but that with the coming of manhood all these must give place to the solid facts of experience and demonstration, and that the world will soon settle down to a cold, positive, material philosophy—soulless, godless.

Several things seem evident to me. The first is that it is useless to ignore the fact that our age is looking the whole question of religion squarely in the face, and with a power and fearlessness of thought and critical realization of facts never before known. And this is only the beginning.

Where there is one mind at work now there will be ten at work next year, and a hundred more the next, and so on. Again, I think it is useless to shut our eyes to the fact that there is very general and wide-spread doubt and distrust as to the authority and reliability of religious teachings. There is even most painful misgivings in the minds of many religious teachers themselves, and every now and then is made a public renunciation of what they had once accepted as true. And still another thing: Protestantism, more than all other religious agencies, has set this spirit of individualism, this spirit of personal inquiry to work; and Protestantism, more than all others, must stand by it and see it through.

Now let us look around and see in what shape the churches are, and what they are doing, and what they ought to do to meet these new conditions and these new demands.

The most painful thing in the whole outlook is the disadvantage at which truth is put, and the disadvantage at which individual minds are put by reason of sectarianism. In the

controversial days of the past, special religious ideas sought shelter in new organizations, and these new organizations were turned into forts of defense. The children who were born in these forts naturally enough took up with their ideas and their warfare against all others. And hence you will see that individual minds are bound by the power of organization, and by this power set to fighting for special dogmas instead of entering the broad field of truth. If one was born, or by any other means got into a Calvinistic fort, or a Baptist fort, or an Episcopal fort, he must use the guns of that fort or get out of it. No matter if the whole community of open-visioned men and women see that those guns are useless, and that their noisy firing has long since ceased to do any good, still he must load and shoot, or himself be shot as a heretic. You say, why don't he go to some other fort? Yes, leave the artillery for the navy, or Michigan City for Joliet. And even if men are perfectly honest in maintaining the special tenets of any sect, yet are they placed at the disadvantage before the world of appearing as special pleaders; that is, everybody knows beforehand just what gun each one must shoot or leave his fort. Hence the strange and painful spectacle of Mr. Beecher, at 65, with wonderful forensic display, declaring against Calvinism and the terrible forms of future punishment into which a dogmatic age had long ago cast those doctrines. The public mind had long since abandoned these dark ideas, and the public interest was not in hearing anything new; nor yet in the thought that Mr. Beecher had reached any new conclusion in the last ten years; not in these things was the public interest, but in the wonderful fact that Mr. Beecher had taken the great risk of saying what he had long since, and the majority of his audience had long since, believed to be true. Now I say all this is sad and painful enough, that, in an age of so much doubt, sectarian bands should place men at so great a disadvantage. Dr. (now Bishop) Cheney must repeat *verbatim*, a liturgy of long ago, and a sentiment that nobody believes, or leave the church. In Prof. Swing's trial it was publicly stated that the issue was

not upon the truth or falsity of Calvinism—not this, but did Prof. Swing believe that doctrine? Not, was he a good soldier, but did he use a Presbyterian gun? Dr. Smith wrote an article on the bible for the *British Encyclopædia*, and no man on either continent was better able for the task, but because it seemed to conflict with the teachings of his church he was called to account. Now all these things put the truth at disadvantage. There is coming to be a very wide and general distrust as to the honesty of clergymen in what they say; and this distrust is ten times worse in its effects on the public faith than could be their boldest utterances with a clear, strong, open-faced honesty back of them.

Then there is another phase to this whole state of public unrest and doubt. It is hardly reasonable to suppose that all these men, clergymen included, who doubt are either ignorant or dishonest. The supposition should rather be that there are some things that have come down to us that may not be wholly true; and that need, to say the least, re-stating. The history of the church in the past should favor this conclusion. The men of the past were generally sincere, and many of them very able; but time has proved that they were not always correct in their teachings. The geo-centric theory of the earth, once so stoutly fought for, has been abandoned. The six-days theory of creation is now generally given up, and evolution is now pressing very hard upon the doctrine of a special creation. And then, when there are so many conflicting and even contradictory dogmas held by the different churches, it is not modest in any one of these to say that it alone is infallible and all the rest wrong. Nor is it immodest in the world of doubters to suggest that none of them are wholly right. And it seems to me that all the churches should be willing, and even glad, to accept any new light, or to modify their views when it seems reasonable that they have over-stated facts, or claimed more than may be maintained. Why should they not even readily admit mistakes? Science has done this all along and has grown thereby. The bible itself was the growth of ages, and

so has been Christian doctrine. The creeds of the churches were generally formulated in the heat of some controversy, and were likely to not be free from the bias of their times. Why should we say that those men were infallible, and that wisdom died with them? The whole Christian world has agreed that we need a new translation of the bible, and we are not afraid that truth will suffer thereby. Why be so fearful on other points?

Take, as an example, the subject of eternal punishment that is attracting so much attention. A dreamy age, or an age of cruel despotism, might accept such a dogma, even in its most horrible forms. But ours is an age of realization. Men weigh their words—fix a meaning to them. The awful pictures of hell in the past ages rise up before the prophetic realization of minds in our day, and they see the meaning—the terrible fact set forth, and they are not afraid to ask if such a thing can be true. Before the Reformation, even all the way from Origen, there was some latitude allowed in thinking of this fearful subject. But the doctrine of a purgatory had been abused by Romanism; this abuse must be stopped; and with one terrible blow Protestantism struck down all prayers for the dead, and all possibility and hope of any help or mercy ever reaching a soul beyond this life. The history of human thought records not another step so bold and far-reaching. It would do in the heat of a great controversy, and in such days might be accepted; but any philosopher or student of human thought might easily foresee that there must come a reaction.

Or, take another doctrine; the doctrine of election and reprobation, that mercilessly consigns unnumbered millions of human beings to all the pains of an eternal hell without any possibility of escape. This, too, was born out of controversy, and in such times might be accepted; but there must come an after-thought—a reaction. Men will rise up and ask if the bible teaches such things? And if told that it does, they will ask who put such things in the bible; and if told that God put

them there, they will ask, who is God, that He should say or do such awful things? And if pressed, they will deny both God and the bible. The religious sentiment is very tender and deep in the human mind, and it will go a great way with the truths that seem to lead along the paths of religion; but there is such a thing as asking the mind and heart to go too far; and then they will rebel. Men must not be asked in the name of so holy a sentiment as religion, to give up reason and good sense, and every feeling of justice, and to lie down and be spit upon and trampled in the dirt. They won't do it, and I am glad of it. It is not strange that many of the best minds in Europe and America are protesting, and protesting in the name of all that is sacred and dear in the thought of God and religion, against such overstatements. Men are ready to confess that God is, and should be, sovereign; but they must not be asked to believe that He is an unfeeling tyrant, and still told to love Him and call Him God. They won't do it; they can't do it; they ought not to try to do it. Men are ready to believe in punishment for sin here and hereafter—they feel it, they know it—but they are not willing to believe in all the terrible ideas of Dante and Milton; ideas that were possible only in a cold, dark age, and that rob the universe of God and all sense of justice and right. And I am glad of that, too; they would be worse, and not better, for believing such things.

Or, take another subject; take the bible. Men want to believe in the bible; its associations are sacred; its themes are ennobling; its truths do them good; they love it. But when they are asked to believe all that has been taught about the bible; that every word, just as we hear it, is inspired directly from the Lord, and that all its words are absolutely infallible; their critical sense rises up and says, we can't do it. They are willing to say, and can easily believe as our book of discipline says, that the holy scriptures *contain* the word of God. But Protestantism needed an infallible bible to put against an infallible pope. Great abuses had crept into the church through the sanction of tradition, and the reformers did well to exalt

the bible as the one rule of morality and faith; and we do well to hold it in that sacred place; but, then, that is enough, and we should not attempt to claim for the bible what it does not claim for itself. There is such a thing as overdoing in religious matters, as well as underdoing. There is such a thing as asking men to believe too much as well as too little. And there are those who do believe too much, just as surely as there are those who do not believe enough.

Now it is not the purpose of this discourse—I think I am modest enough to confess myself incapable of such a task—to show just where the exact truth of all these matters in doubt and controversy is to be found. I am speaking of them as facts of our times; and wish to point out what seems to me to be our duty, or the best thing for the churches to do. It is useless, as I have said, to try to conceal or ignore the fact of the widespread and growing unbelief of our times. We cannot, and if we could we ought not attempt to repress inquiry. Truth is strong in itself, and strongest when brought out into the clearest light; and whatever needs the shelter and cloak of darkness and ignorance is unworthy the name of religion, and must fall before the intelligence of the nineteenth century. Nor is anything gained by calling men infidels, or any other hard names; such words have long since ceased to be a terror; no one is scared by them. What I think we should do is this: We should ask what is the nature and extent of all this doubting, and how far it affects the real spirit and life of a pure religion? Not how it affects the dogma of this or that church, but how it affects character and a true religious life. Pure religion, as seen in our text and as taught by Jesus Christ in the 25th of Matthew and the 15th of John, is a life, a growth, a divine spirit within, coming out in love and sympathy and helpfulness to our fellow-beings. Such a life rests upon a very few and simple beliefs or truths; and these mankind are generally quite ready to accept without having them forced down their throats. The masses are ready to believe in God, and in christian lands to believe in Jesus Christ, and

to believe in the bible, and in a good life, and that justice will be done to all hereafter. But the churches have not been content with these simple beliefs that lie at the bottom of a good life. It is not enough to believe in God, and that He is a rewarder of all that seek Him; a thousand things are brought forward about God, and many of them not only unintelligible but unreasonable, and we are called upon to believe all these. It is not enough to believe in Jesus Christ, but a thousand things are brought forward about Jesus Christ, and about the atonement, and many of these things are not only vague and conflicting, but to many minds utterly repugnant to their highest sense of justice and right, and we are asked to believe all these. It is not enough to believe in the bible, but here also you are asked to believe many things about the bible, and many of these critical minds cannot accept. It is not enough to believe in future suffering for sin; you must believe all that is taught about hell; very much of which is to most minds wholly unthinkable. Now, why not let all men come to God, and to Jesus Christ, and to the bible, and get such truth as they can, and get such help to a good life as they can, and not bewilder them with so many things about God and Christ and the bible? If they rest in these great facts and reach a good life, is not this enough? I verily believe if half the preachers in the land were to leave their pulpits and go to work for the American Bible Society, there would be far less infidelity in twenty years than there will be as things are now going.

But you say: What will then become of our churches, our sects? Our churches! Ah! there's the rub. Not Jesus Christ, but *our* church, and *our pet creed.* Poor thing! What a pity if it should die! Save your creed whether you save sinners or not. Insist on a thousand definitions about God, and Jesus Christ, and the Trinity, and the bible, and future punishment; save these definitions; save your creed—bring it in out of the cold wind like a shivering little lamb in March, and wrap it up tenderly in a warm blanket and pour down a little warm milk—save these things if you drive the whole sensible

world to infidelity in doing it. Now I say that the unbelief of our time is not half so much against the great truths of religion as against the man-made dogmas about religion. And what the churches should do is to exalt religion itself, and call the people to its joy and beauty and work—call them away from sin to righteousness. What difference does it make whether a man believes in an endless hell or not, if he be a good man? If he love the sermon on the mount and will live by it? If he believe the 12th chapter of Romans or the 13th of Corinthians and live by them, suppose he don't believe that the world was made in six days or that Jonah was swallowed by the whale? What of it? What has that to do with a good life? Let him believe what he can—that is, what he thinks true. So long as mankind are drawn to the life and experiences of religion, we need not worry about their beliefs; but if they fail of these, all their fine-spun orthodoxy will be of very little value to themselves or to others.

Another thing: I think the churches should hasten to confess that we are all finite—just beginning—and that all these questions that relate to God and the future are too great for our full comprehension; that, in fact, after all our boasted knowledge, we really know very little about them. Let us confess that it is not necessary for the purposes of a good life, that we should know everything. Then let us have our schools of theology, and our creeds and definitions if we choose, and our churches, and our speculations about all these points; but let us get over the folly of quarreling about them, and refusing to fellowship with those who differ from us. Let us be done with the folly and even wickedness of making a doorway out of all our definitions and dogmas, through which souls must pass to reach the ever-present Lord God. Let us put away our narrowness and prejudice, and be brothers in a common love and a common cause. Let there be a broader personal liberty of opinion; let it not be thought a crime for a man to hold and express an honest conviction; let there be a frank, open honesty in the pulpit; let all unite in the active duties

of doing good; let us think more of conduct and less of creed—and there are few so skeptical as to even question the truth and beauty of such a religion. I verily believe that thousands in this city would gladly come into the churches, could they come with their honest convictions, and not be asked to believe what they cannot believe, nor be blamed for believing what they honestly think is true. And their honest doubts are not in the way of a pure heart and a good life. Religion is an uplifting of the soul to God, and an outgoing of the heart in deeds of kindness to men, and a belief in hell or in some special creed or theory of inspiration is not essential to such a life. It is wicked to any longer stand up and teach that the only way to heaven is by a Romish mass, or a Baptist immersion, or a Methodist class-meeting, or the Presbyterian's five points. They have all done good in their way. Men may be good in all of them, or may get to heaven without any of them. The love of God is broader than the narrowness of men, and the Holy Spirit finds the open door of all willing and waiting souls. The pure in heart, of whatever name or nation, shall see God.

"A new type of man is wanted in religion—a man wholly free in thought and honest in word, but wholly reverent in feeling and broad in sympathies. He is coming; he is making, but making as they make costly furniture—*in pieces*. The freedom and honesty are being made in one shop, the breath and reverence in another. The orthodox shop appropriates some of the heretic shop's freedom, and the heretic borrows some of the orthodox shop's reverence. The Methodist shop offers feeling, and the Episcopal shop produces good taste; the Unitarian shop furnishes breadth and common sense, and the Swedenborgian shop its sense of mystic and poetic meanings; the Calvinist contributes his sense of God as moral law, and the Universalist his sense of God as love; and the Radical his trust in reason, his hearty welcome to new thought and his blunt honesty. And thus the type of religious man improves as a hundred years go by. It takes the round generation, and more than one generation, to make the several parts of a costly new man and get him finally put together."—W. C. G.

Notes and News.

Book agents are already canvassing for a life of Pope Pius IX.

The Pamphlet Mission solicits items of news about Liberal men and movements, particularly in the North-West.

The Spiritualists of Paris propose to have a permanent circle at the Exposition, conducted by their best (?) mediums.

Rev. A. S. Nickerson, of Charlestown, N. H., has resigned his present pastorate, and is thinking a little about the West. Where is the Western field that wants a good man?

Says the *New York Herald:* "Some of the creeds insist that we must forgive our enemies, but that God is going to roast His. There may have been neater remarks on this subjects, but we don't remember any."

Every parent, and every body else interested in the young (and who is not interested in the young?) should read the thoughtful article of Prof. W. G. Sumner in the March *Scribner*, on "What our Boys are Reading." It is well calculated to open many eyes that ought to be opened.

Prof. Swing sometimes says things which to some of us are discouraging. Hear him: "It is very difficult to see and hear a dozen wise men if there be one fool at hand. He can so worry the mind and soul of the listener that the whole universe will seem to be overflowing with nothing but nonsense."

Rev. Robert Collyer is preparing to go to England about the first of July. He says: "Oh! I must go; I'm getting so dull and rusty that I just think I *must* go over the water and spend a month or two trampin a'foot up and down the lanes and by-ways where I used to go when I was a boy, and *get something fresh to say.*"

Rev. W. H. Crocker, of La Porte, is giving a course of Sunday Evening Lectures in the Opera House, on "Jesus as the Christ of the Gospels;" "Jesus in Painting, or the Christ of Art;" "Jesus in Speculation, or the Christ of Theology;" "Jesus in Human Life, or the Christ of Religious Experience;" "The Christ of the Future."

We shall print in our next issue a sermon from Rev. M. J. Savage, of Boston. A private note from Mr. Savage brings us the unwelcome news that he has been for some weeks suffering from an attack of pneumonia, and has been ordered by his physicians to go to Aiken, S. C., to spend the next month or two. He is in excellent

spirits over it, however, and says: "I expect to come back as chipper as a Minnesota grasshopper."

Rev. Dr. C. D. W. BRIDGMAN, for fifteen years pastor of a Baptist Church, Albany, has accepted a call to the Madison Ave. Baptist Church, New York, and is alarming some of the dogmatists of his denomination, but delighting all lovers of breadth and progress, by his brave utterances against creed limitations, and in favor of a religion which makes its fellowship as broad as "love to God and man." The *Examiner* of course scents heresy, but we hope Dr. BRIDGMAN is made of too good stuff to allow himself to be frightened.

The Spring session of the "Illinois Fraternity of Liberal Societies" meets at Bloomington, April 9, 10, 11. Sec'y MILLER says: "We expect to have the liveliest and best meeting ever held in the interest of Liberal Religion in Illinois."

"The Wisconsin Conference of Unitarian and Independent Societies" will meet at Broadhead, April 16, 17, 18.

Both programmes we had hoped to publish in this number of the PAMPHLET MISSION, but they have not yet come to hand.

Rev. Mr. SNYDER, pastor of the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis, has inaugurated a series of Sunday evening lectures in his church, by representatives of different denominations. Rev. C. F. ROBERTSON, Bishop of Missouri, tells what Episcopalians believe; Rev. W. W. BOYD, (Baptist) what Baptists believe; RABBI SONNESCHEIN, what Israelites believe; Rev. W. C. FALCONER, (Presbyterian) what Presbyterians believe; Mr. SNYDER, what Unitarians believe; Rev. C. R. HOUGHTON, (M. E.) what Methodists believe; and Rev. J. C. LEARNED speaks in the series, on "The Present Faith."

The *Whitehall* (N. Y.) *Times* has discovered a new use for sunbeams. It says: "A little six-year-old Whitehall boy was watching the sunbeams as they shot through a window and diagonally across the room. 'Mamma,' he inquired, 'what are those streaks?' 'Those, my son,' she replied, 'are sunbeams from Heaven.' 'Oh, I know what they are for, mamma,' said the little fellow, who had been sliding down beams in the barn loft, 'they are what God slides the babies down on, when he sends 'em to folks.'"

The Liberal cause in Buffalo, N. Y., seems to be going forward with unwonted vigor. The Unitarians, with a society of wealth, culture and influence, have for years felt themselves placed under a cloud on account of their poor old church, which they have been constantly and increasingly ashamed of. But now under Mr. CUTTER a new morning breaks. They are going to have a better church. Already they report $38,000 raised toward it. The Universalist Church, with its fine large house of worship, and under the leadership of the able Dr. FLETCHER, has long exercised a commanding influence in the city.

The Boston Young Men's Christian Union is being favored with a series of weekly lectures on American History, by Rev. S. W. BUSH. The subjects of the lectures are: "The Settlement of the Original Colonies;" "The Growth of the Colonies into States;"

"The American Revolution;" "The Revolutionary War;" "Progress and Parties under the Constitution;" "Secession." Early in April the Union proposes to begin a series of "Talks on Art." We doubt if there is any one of our large cities that has an institution which is doing so much for young men as the Boston Y. M. C. U.

SYDNEY SMITH, on entering a drawing-room in a West-end mansion, found it lined with mirrors on all sides. Finding himself reflected in every direction, he said that he "supposed he was at a meeting of the clergy, and there seemed to be a very respectable attendance." We would suggest the inquiry, whether it would not be a good plan to have churches fitted up with large mirrors around the walls in the same way, for the purpose of multiplying the congregation. Though it might not result in really bringing any more persons under the sound of the Gospel, yet it might make those who were present less lonely.

While we are rejoicing over the coming of peace in Europe, let us not forget to rejoice also that our neighbor Cuba, who has suffered so sadly and so long, has at last laid down her sword. After a war longer in duration than that which, one hundred years ago, gained us our independence, the Cuban insurgents have been able to obtain from the Spanish authorities terms which compensate them for all their long—sometimes savage, but certainly heroic—perseverance. They do not get their independence, but they get what is probably (for them) better, viz: such freedom, privileges and representation in the Spanish government, as will insure them, perhaps, as good a political condition as it is possible for them to enjoy, until they have more popular intelligence and less religious superstition.

The Mutual Improvement Club, of Janesville, J. LL. JONES, leader, at a recent literary session had a study, in the Science Section, of the present discussion of spontaneous generation; in the Minor Classic Section a study of the Fithiof Saga, and in the Concord Section a paper on The House of Seven Gables, by Mrs. JONES; and a spirited paper on Thoreau, by J. M. BURGESS, Esq;—all of which elicited interesting discussion. This club has recently had lectures from Mrs. ABBY SAGE RICHARDSON, on "The Lake School of Poets," Mrs. BENSON of Clinton, Wis., on "Michael Angelo," J. K. APPLEBEE of Sparta, on "The Merchant of Venice." Mrs. RICHARDSON is to give three more lectures before the Club. Mrs. KATE N. DOGGETT of Chicago is to give her lecture on "Raphael," soon, and Prof. FARRAR of Milwaukee is to close a series of six evenings with the Sculptors with a conversational lecture and Stereopticon Exhibition of Statuary pictures.

The publication of GREG's "Creed of Christendom," by OSGOOD of Boston, is a most excellent service done to the rational understanding of the Bible in this country. Though written quite a number of years ago, and not by any means the best of *critical* works, yet the spirit it manifests, and its judicious and clear estimate of the Bible books, are such as to make it one of the very best popular expositions of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. Mr. GREG has added to the original edition numerous notes and additions, and a lengthy introduction that is of great interest and value. His inquiries into the value of Christian doctrines, the possibility of realizing those

doctrines in actual life, and as to whether a revelation can be made of any truths men might not naturally discover, are of great value. As an interpretation of the Bible from the standpoint of rationalism this work is exceedingly suggestive. It deserves a wide reading, as the work of one of the finest writers and most acute of essayists in England, and for its real merit as an exposition of the inner life and spirit of religion, as expressed in the Bible.—G. W. C.

Here is a chip from Rev. J. LL. JONES' Washington-Birth-day-Commemoration-Service Sermon, on "The Religious Faith of the Revolutionary Fathers:"—"If religion be identified with any external church or formulated creed, the Fathers of the Revolution had not religion enough to make it worth while to speak of it. They were proverbially deficient in that faith represented by the catechism. Their names were conspicuous for their absence from the roll of the churches. Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, John Adams, to say nothing of the 'rebellious needle man,' the great pamphleteer of the Revolution, Thomas Paine—each has won the name of 'infidel.' But these men were not shallow scoffers; they dealt in no flippant negation. Grand deeds always grow out of grand convictions. These men believed in God because they wrought grandly for man. Believing in God and believing in man, they believed in themselves. They revered the holy shrine within; bowed before the sacred 'I ought;' reared, under God, that temple of true religion, the pillars of which are wrought from the enduring marble of character; hence, long as time will last, will the Laurel upon their brow preserve its green."

Nothing more impressively shows the immense advance the world has made in civilization and humanity within the past four and a half centuries, than the contrast which appears between tne present conquest of Constantinople and the preceding, 425 years ago. When that city was conquered by MAHOMET II, it was given up for three days to lust and plunder. Its libraries, its works of art, the most valuable products of its civilization were burned. An indiscriminate massacre of men, women and children, who flocked to the Church of St. Sophia, flooded its pavement with blood. Sixty thousand people were sold away into slavery. Now, how different! The Czar has won an overwhelming conquest of Turkey. The capital is in his hand. Yet all is orderly. There is no reeking of vengeance; there is no turning over of a conquered population to the lust and cruelty and rapacity of an unbridled soldiery. The moment the end for which the war is waged is gained, the war stops. True, it is a sad thing that the most enlightened part of the world has not got beyond the settlement of disputes by the irrational and inhuman method of appealing to arms. Yet it is much that an appeal to arms has come to mean so different a thing from what it meant four or five centuries ago.

From the *Register* we gather the following items:—The Third Society, (Unitarian) Dorchester, Mass., has called Rev. E. F. HAYWARD of Fall River, to become its pastor.——Rev. H. C. BADGER has gone to Ithaca, N. Y., (seat of Cornell University,) to serve the Liberal cause there until the close of the present college year.——To clear off the debt from the new Unitarian Church in Washington, the American Unitarian Association advanced from its treasury $3,500; in

order to replace this, Dr. ELIOT of St. Louis offers to raise the last $500 as soon as the other $3,000 shall have been subscribed.——The last tracts published by the Unitarian Association (address, 7 Tremont Place, Boston,) for *free distribution*, are: "A Story of the Prairies," by Rev. ROBERT COLLYER; "Christ and the Creeds," by Rev. J. C. KIMBALL; and "Unitarian Faith Stated in Bible Language," by Rev. J. C. PARSONS.——Rev. W. MCKAIG, formerly pastor of the Ninth Presbyterian Church of Chicago, is now pastor of "Unity Congregation" San Jose, Cal.——Rev. M. K. SCHERMERHORN is still preaching with success in Hartford Ct. The Liberals have offered $30,000 for the Synagogue property on Charter Oak Ave.——ROBERT LAIRD COLLIER, now pastor of the Second Unitarian Society in Boston, has been preaching recently on "Christianity and the Modern Drama; or, in Praise of the Theatre and in Hope of its Purification," and seemingly stirring up a hornet's nest thereby.

"The Ways of the Spirit," by Dr. F. H. HEDGE, is written in the same catholic spirit and in the same scholarly way of all his books. There is nothing of the dogmatist in it; but it is the work of an honest, patient, judicious inquirer after truth, who is possessed of a reverent, believing spirit. He never writes to defend any school of thought or any church, but does equal justice to all, and points out with equal fairness the truths of Orthodoxy and the faults of Unitarianism. Possibly he does not draw on the results of recent study as to the development of religious ideas quite as often as might be desirable. For instance, he regards Judaism as not affected by Animism and nature-worship, as were the religions of Egypt and Persia. KUENEN, TIELE, and other scholars, have shown to what a large extent Judaism also was an evolution out of these lower forms of religion. His distinction between natural and revealed religions seems to be purely arbitrary. The religion which springs out of meditation and inward thought is quite as much a "natural" religion as one that originates in the contemplation of outward nature, and to call it "revelation" is rather misleading than helpful. These, however, are mere matters of opinion and expression, while the book is everywhere full of great thoughts expressed in the noblest and most beautiful language. We would most heartily recommend it to all who are seeking a free and untrammeled faith, that is yet reverent and deeply spiritual in its import. This is a genuine and inspiring volume, full on every page of matter for meditation and earnest thought. All who have read Dr. HEDGE's previous books will find this equally suggestive and helpful.—G. W. C.

The Society for Municipal Reform in the City of New York recently held a meeting to discuss the exemption of church and other property from taxation. In that city alone, it appears there is over $38,000,000 worth of church property which pays no taxes. Mr. JACKSON SCHULTZ said that the Catholics acknowledged $6,900,000 worth; but he felt free to say the Cathedral on Fifth Ave. alone, with the land on which it stands, is worth more than that. The Episcopalians have $10,700,000 worth of property accredited to them, which is also an under estimate. Mr. SINCLAIR TOUSEY was opposed to the exemption of any property from taxation except hospitals and jails. This New York meeting is chiefly interesting because it shows the direction the best thought of the country is taking on this subject of

taxation or non-taxation of church property. All around the horizon the thunders are beginning to mutter, telling there is a storm coming about this thing. Our communities will not much longer consent that the poor man shall pay a tax on his mortgaged farm, while rich corporations like Trinity Church of New York, with its millions of property, goes scott free. Possibly the wise solution of the difficulty would be to *limit* the amount of property which should be exempt from taxation, so that a society of a given number of members might hold a certain amount free, (the amount to be fixed according to the number of members) while for all beyond that amount they should be taxed. Either this, *or else* taxation of churches and church property precisely the same as everything else; and probably the latter.

We collect the following items of Universalist news from the *New Covenant:*—Rev. G. S. GOUDY has just organized a society at Alma City, Minn., with twenty members, and good prospects.——Dr. RYDER has been visiting Iowa, and preaching in Grinnell and Newton.——A new house of worship is building in Fairfield, Ont.——A "Week of Meetings" has recently been held in Bay City, Mich., by Revs. KNICKERBACKER, CRUM, DINSMORE, STOCKING, FLUHRER, CRANE and HANSON.——Rev. C. P. NASH has resigned his pastorate in Lewiston, Me., to take effect in June.——Rev. RUSSELL TOMLINSON, for more than thirty years pastor in Plymouth, Mass., died a few days ago at the age of seventy-three.——Portland, Mich., is without a pastor; it is a good field for a good man.——Rev. J. L. DINSMORE, Lapeer, Mich., is publishing a little missionary sheet entitled "*Glad Tinings.*" A lecture course has been carried on during the winter in the town, with Revs. CHAS. FLUHRER, A. CRUM, C. W. KNICKERBACKER, G. W. COOKE and C. STEBBINS as lecturers.——A Conference was held at Belle Plaine, Iowa, beginning March 10, and another at Portland, Mich., March 13.——Messrs. TODD and BRIGHAM have been holding meetings at Black River Falls, Wis., which resulted in fourteen baptisms and nine additions to the church.——Rev. B. F. BOWLES, of Philadelpia, proposes to try to organize a Universalist Church in Detroit, where the Liberal cause is now represented only by a single Unitarian church.——Rev. AUGUSTA L. CHAPIN has accepted a call to Aurora, Ills., where she begins her work at once.

The following is from a sermon recently preached in this city by Rev. W. J. HUNTER, D. D., rector of St. Paul's Reformed Episcopal Church. It is an utterance of the kind that makes religion bleed, and sows the land with seeds of infidelity. Speaking of the story of the Witch of Endor, he says: "There are some people who profess to believe the bible in general, while they claim the right to throw out certain portions of it. A man may say, 'O yes, I believe the bible, except that witch story, or that story of Jonah and the whale, I don't believe them.' But if you throw these out what have you left? If you throw out this witch story, you must throw out with it every other passage in the bible where witchcraft, and necromancy, and sorcery, and the spirit of divination, and satanical possessions are recorded, and so you throw out the miracles of Moses, of Christ, and of the apostles. If you throw out the story of Jonah and the great fish, you must throw out the veracity of Christ, for He quoted it as a fact, and called it a sign of His Death and resurrection. The bible must stand or fall together, and you must prove the book, the whole book,

an imposture, otherwise you must accept this witch story, and along with it, an infallible proof of the immortality of the soul."

This witch story an infallible proof of the immortality of the soul! Heaven pity us! The Sermon on the Mount, and Paul's chapter on Charity, dependent for their value and authority upon the truth of the story of Jonah and the whale! Are we living in the nineteenth century, or have we got back into the dark ages? No wonder that thousands are trampling the bible under foot, when Christian ministers thus stand up and tell the people that the bible must stand or fall with its incredible and utterly foundationless stories of this kind! Who will save the bible from its "friends?"

The *New Church Independent* and the *Religio-Philosophical Journal* of this city, are doing some hand-shaking, (rather *frigid*) and asking the question why the bodies which they stand for (the Swedenborgians and Spiritualists) should not fraternize. Says the *New Church Independent*:

> We regard the present hostile and somewhat uncharitable attitude of the readers of Swedenborg toward modern Spiritualists, as most unfortunate. * * As Christians of the New Age—claiming to possess a revelation which explains and gives the true philosophy of these phenomena, should it not be our solemn business and duty to affiliate with these people, who are as much a part of God's great family as we are—and let our light shine in upon their darkness, that they may see the danger to which they are exposed in giving themselves up to the dictation of spirits, not knowing the laws that govern intercourse between these two realms.

To this and a good deal more in the same strain, the *Religio-Philosophical Journal* replies:

> All this is in excellent spirit, and we fully reciprocate the good feeling it displays. That Swedenborg was a wonderful Medium—perhaps the most wonderful of the last five centuries—we do not doubt. That he was infallible in his teachings, and that his visions always represent the absolute truth, we cannot believe. Swedenborg seems to us to carry with him, on some occasions, the effects of his Lutheran education. His father was a Bishop, and his own religious prejudices often crop out in his writings, and it is then that we distrust him. Some of the most eminent Swedenborgians have outgrown their belief in the infallibility of Swedenborg. While we find much in him that carries internal evidence of truth; while we and all Spiritualists are largely indebted to him, directly or indirectly, for illuminating much in the spiritual theory that seemed obscure or contradictory, we are not blind to his scientific mistakes, or to the prejudices and illusions which at times seem to have dimmed his spiritual vision. * * Swedenborgians have too long occupied a position of ill-disguised arrogance, antagonism and contempt toward Spiritualists. We are glad to see indications of a change. If Swedenborgians generally would be actuated by the broad and liberal spirit manifested in the writings of Mr. B. F. BARRETT of Germantown, Pa., we should be more likely to borrow of each other's light, and the result could not fail to be conducive to the benefit of both, as well as of humanity at large.

From all of which it is pretty evident that the two bodies are not yet as near together as they might be *in sympathy*, however near they may be in some fundamental points of their religious philosophy.

Readers of the PAMPHLET MISSION will have noticed with pleasure that Rabbi KOHLER of this city, pastor of the Sinai Congregation, (Hebrew) who is one of the ripest scholars and most progressive religious thinkers of the country, is to be represented in these pages, by a sermon, in a few weeks.

Judaism as well as Christianity has its "Orthodox" and "Liberal" wings. The Liberal Jews stand upon nearly the same ground,

so far as doctrines are concerned, with Liberal Christians. Certainly the two are near enough together so that they should join hands in religious fellowship, as they are doing in not a few directions.

The very able and interesting articles of Prof. ADLER on "Reformed Judaism" and "Evolution of the Hebrew Religion," which appeared some months ago in the *North American Review*, are re-published as a part of Mr. ADLER's recent volume, "Creed and Deed." We commend the whole book as at least fresh, earnest and suggestive; but those two articles we regard as particularly valuable. We know of no better presentation, in brief form, of the origin and early development of the religion of the Jews, and the changes that Judaism has undergone in recent times. It should be remarked that Prof. ADLER is a radical of the radicals—much too far advanced for most of the Reformed Jews. In the discourses which make up the body of his book, he sets forth the central doctrines upon which he has established his "Society for Ethical Culture" in New York, which is attracting so much attention.

Says the *North American Review* in its criticism of "Creed and Deed:" "Dr. ADLER is a liberal thinker of great learning and enlightenment, and endowed with a good deal of the fervor which marks the foreordained priest. No one can read the book without being interested and improved by it, as the author brings to the discussion ripe scholarship, keen interest and warm sympathy." We hope to have Dr. ADLER represented in our pages at no distant day.

The general meeting of the American Social Science Association for this year is to held in Cincinnati, beginning May 18th, (immediately at the close of the Music Festival,) and continuing one week. We know of no association in the United States that seems to us to be doing more valuable work than this association, and its work is of especial interest to religious Liberals, because so exactly in harmony with their own. Some of the subjects to be discussed in Cincinnati are "Forestry," "The Silver Question," "Banking," "Taxation," "Co-operative Societies," "Relation of the Government to Railroads," "Restricted Suffrage in Cities," "Intellectual Prosperity" and "Journalism." All members of the Association, and the public generally, are invited to attend. Those who cannot attend, but are interested to provide themselves with the best thought and information possible to be obtained upon the great subjects of Education, Finance, Philanthrophy, Political Economy, Health, Jurisprudence, Social and National Reform, cannot do better than to spend five dollars a year to make and keep themselves members of the Association, which entitles them to all the valuable publications of the Association gratis.

Single numbers of the *Social Science Journal*, containing the transactions of the Association, and the most valuable papers read at the general meetings, can be had for $1.00. (Address F. B. SANBORN, Secretary, Concord, Mass.) The last number of the *Journal* (No. 9, January, 1878,) makes a volume of 176 pages, containg, among others, papers by W. STANLEY JEVONS (of England) on "The Silver Question," JOHN P. TOWNTEND on "Savings Banks," WM. MINOT, Jr. on "Social Taxation," T. M. LOGAN on "Education in the Southern States," W. L. TRENHOLM on "The Industrial and Social Aspects of the Southern Question," HORACE WHITE on "The Tariff Question," SAMUEL BOWLES on "The Relation of State and Municipal Governments," and DANIEL

L. HARRIS on "Municipal Economy." These papers, while not all of equal value, of course, are yet as a whole at the highest level of American (and English) thought. A cord of ordinary newspaper literature on these subjects weighs less, in real worth, than one of these thoughtful essays.

The fifth annual Conference of Charities will also meet at Cincinnati in connection with the Social Science gathering, and continue in session for three days—from May 21 to 24.

Here are a few ringing words to women, as full of food for thought as they are of "ring," which we cannot refrain quoting from a letter recently written by Mrs. CELIA P. WOOLLEY of this city, to the *Christian Register*:

Why do not the women of the Liberal churches form organizations similar to those of the orthodox, yet much broader in scope; or leaving out the word 'churches,' why do not the liberal women of the land arise in the might of their intelligence and culture and take a hand in the work of religious freedom? Women as women have never taken a prominent and decided stand in favor of free-thought. The orthodox church-woman is a staunch defender of her faith. What heroism, what pluck, and never-failing patience are hers when the interests of her religion are at stake. If the women whose religion lies not in church and creed, but in character and reason, would but imbibe a little of this spirit of loyalty and aggressiveness, liberalism would not be the difficult thing to maintain it is today. But the liberal-minded woman seems often to care for nothing but the mental ease and respite her opinions bring. The proselyting spirit among women in the churches has subjected them to much scorn and laughter; but the zeal and devotion which gives rise to this spirit are worthy of emulation, and are just those adjuncts to success most needed in liberal ranks. If woman makes a good fighter for the church, she will make as strong a defender against its encroachments. The Woman's Christian Association presents a solid phalanx in favor of orthodoxy. Where is the corresponding body of free-minded women to match this great force; to stand for complete intellectual enfranchisement where the former stands for superstition; and to demonstrate to the world that in matters pertaining to religion where woman has until now acted chiefly as inquisitor and fanatic, she has at last reached the position of thinker and liberator?

In connection with the above we are glad to announce that an organization of the women of the four Unitarian Churches of Chicago is about to be formed, the general objects of which are defined in Article II of the proposed Constitution, as "the mutual improvement of its members, and the general instruction of all concerned, in the principles of free and rational religion, through the consideration of the following and kindred subjects: "Religion in History," "Relation of Religion and Science," "Relation of Religion to Morals," "Current Religious Literature." The Society proposes to hold monthly meetings at the Athenæum. Its work is divided into four departments, corresponding to the above topics. The object of this Society, and of others which it is hoped will follow, is to raise the standard of intelligence among women on the general questions of religion and progress, and thereby promote not only her greater but *better* influence in the church and in society at large. The work here entered upon deserves great commendation, and we trust the example set will be followed by the women connected with the Liberal churches throughout the North-West.

The number of new publications in Germany for the year 1877 reaches the unprecedented figure of 16,444, of which nearly one-half are entirely new works. The catalogue contains 933 pp. octavo.